

## **Emmaus Moravian Church and Manse**

West of Palestina

Coral Bay

The property on which the Emmaus Moravian Church and Manse now stand was given to the Moravians in 1782 by Governor Thomas de Malleville after his conversion by Brother Cornelius, an African who had become a missionary of the Moravians. As a master mason, Cornelius is known to have built at least six churches for the Moravians. He also became an accomplished linguist and eloquent preacher.

Moravian missionaries first came to the Dutch West Indies in 1732 to establish missions for the religious and educational instruction of the African population of the island. They were the only church allowed to minister to the slaves and were instrumental in establishing Dutch Creole as the primary language spoken by masters and slaves to each other.

The original church on the property was built around 1782 but was destroyed by a hurricane in 1790. A second building was destroyed by fire in 1892. The present church was constructed in 1919. Although the exact date of construction of the manse is not known, it was standing by the late 1780s. In addition to being one of the oldest remaining buildings on the island, it reflects almost 250 years of Moravian influence on the culture of the present-day Virgin Islands. [CA 11/7/77, 77001531]